

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**JOINT STUDY COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES
REPORT**

DECEMBER 2008

**To: Senator Marc Basnight, President Pro Tempore of the Senate
Representative Joe Hackney, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Members of the North Carolina Senate
Members of the North Carolina House of Representatives**

**The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues respectfully
submits the following report.**



**Senator Doug Berger
Co-Chair**



**Representative Russell Tucker
Co-Chair**

**Marc Basnight
President Pro
Tempore,
North Carolina
Senate**



**Joe Hackney
Speaker,
North Carolina
House of
Representatives**

Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-1096

Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues

Section 1. The **Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues** (hereinafter "Committee") is established by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives pursuant to G.S. 120-19.6(a1), Rule 31 of the Rules of the Senate of the 2007 General Assembly, and Rule 26(a) of the Rules of the House of Representatives of the 2007 General Assembly.

Section 2. The Committee consists of the 12 members listed below. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint 6 members of the Committee. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint 6 members of the Committee. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall each appoint a co-chair from among their respective appointees. Members serve at the pleasure of the appointing officer.

President Pro Tempore Appointments	Speaker of the House Appointments
Senator Doug Berger , Co-chair	Representative Russell E. Tucker, Co-chair
Senator Charlie Dannelly	Representative William D. Brisson, Vice-Chair
Senator Steve Goss	Representative Jeff Barnhart
Senator Floyd McKissick	Representative Jean Farmer-Butterfield
Senator Jean Preston	Representative Wil Neumann
Public Member Nancy Coston, Orange County	Public Member G. Earl Maret, Johnston County

Section 3. The Committee shall study all of the following:

1. Strategies to ensure that local departments of social services have the resources to handle emergency management situations, including the operation of public shelters during hurricanes.
2. Ways to address increasing administrative costs, including those stemming from unfunded state and federal mandates.
3. Staffing issues, including the high turnover rate among child protective service workers and the high cost of hiring and training replacements.
4. Methods to make federal and State funding streams more reliable and manageable.
5. The impact of demographic shifts, including growth in ethnic and elderly populations.

Section 4. The Committee shall meet upon the call of its co-chairs. A quorum of the Committee is a majority of its members. No action may be taken except by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present.

Section 5. The Committee, while in the discharge of its official duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and Article 5A of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes. The Committee may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services, as provided by G.S. 120-32.02.

Section 6. Members of the Committee shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel allowance as provided in G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5 and 138-6, as appropriate.

Section 7. The expenses of the Committee shall be considered expenses incurred for the joint operation of the General Assembly. An initial allocation of \$50,000 shall be provided to the Committee from funds appropriated to the General Assembly.

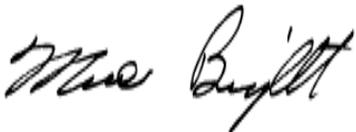
Section 8. The Legislative Services Officer shall assign professional and clerical staff to assist the Committee in its work. The Director of Legislative Assistants of the House of Representatives and the Director of Legislative Assistants of the Senate shall assign clerical support staff to the Committee.

Section 9. The Committee may meet at various locations around the State in order to promote greater public participation in its deliberations.

Section 10. The Committee may submit an interim report on the results of its study, including any proposed legislation, to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, on or before the convening of the 2008 Regular Session of the 2007 General Assembly, by filing a copy of the report with the Office of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Library.

The Committee shall submit a final report on the results of its study, including any proposed legislation, to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, on or before December 31, 2008, by filing a copy of the report with the Office of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Library. The Committee shall terminate on December 31, 2008, or upon the filing of its final report, whichever occurs first.

Effective this 2nd day of May, 2008.



Marc Basnight
President Pro Tempore of the Senate



Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Rev. 5/5/08

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues, met three times from September 26, 2008 until November 13, 2008. The Committee was also invited to attend a November 12, 2008 meeting of the North Carolina Study Commission on Aging to hear presentations on the increasing numbers of older adults in North Carolina.

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues heard from the individuals listed below during the specified meeting dates.

September 26, 2008

- Sherry Bradsher, Director of the Division of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services, gave an overview of programs and services provided through departments of social services during the first meeting. At the second Committee meeting, Ms. Bradsher provided recommendations to improve recruitment and retention of employees in departments of social services.
- Michele Alishahi, Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Research Division, gave an overview of 2008 budgetary actions related to departments of social services.
- Sarah Bradshaw, First Vice President, NC Association of Social Services Directors, introduced Nikki Griffin, Director, Franklin County Social Services, and Sam Haithcock, Director, Durham County Social Services, who provided information on issues of concern to county departments of social services.
- Patrice Roesler, Deputy Director, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, introduced Jerry Ayscue, Manager, Vance County who spoke on behalf of the North Carolina City & County Management Association.

October 15, 2008

- Drake Maynard, Primary HR Partner, NC Office of State Personnel provided information on staffing of county departments of social services.
- Evelyn Williams, Director, NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative, and Paige Black, a former participant in the collaborative, presented information on the North Carolina Child Welfare Education Collaborative which provides assistance to individuals pursuing a Bachelor's or Master's degree in social work.
- Jennifer Frazelle, Director of Program Services, and Elizabeth Spragins, Program Coordinator, with NC Community Colleges presented information on the possibility of a community college program that would provide training and development for local social services employees.
- Angela Taylor, Social & Economic Applications, Division of Information Resource Management, Department of Health and Human Services, gave the Committee an overview of the NC FAST (Families Accessing Services through Technology) program.

November 12, 2008

(Members of the Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues were invited to attend the November 12, 2008 meeting with the North Carolina Study Commission on Aging. This meeting focused on the projected increase in the number of adults age 65+ in North Carolina and the State's need to prepare to meet the demands of this growing population.)

- Theresa Matula, Legislative Analyst, Research Division, gave background information SB 1803/HB 2324 Statewide Aging Study.
- Dennis Streets, Director, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Health and Human Services, presented the current forecasts for the numbers of adults age 65+ and the importance of planning to ensure that programs and services are provided for these individuals.
- Dr. Jim Mitchell, Professor of Sociology and Family Medicine, and Director of the Center on Aging, East Carolina University, presented information on the anticipated changes to North Carolina's older adult population.
- Jane Banks, Executive Director, Ashe Services for Aging, presented an overview of the process undertaken by Ashe County as they prepare to respond to increasing numbers of older adults.
- Gayla Woody, Director, Centralina Area Agency on Aging, introduced Dawn Blobaum, Assistant Town Manager, Town of Davidson, who presented information on the planning process undertaken by the Town of Davidson as they recognize needs and make changes to accommodate the growth in the older adult population.
- The following individuals participated in a panel discussion on opportunities, challenges, concerns, and recommendations to prepare for the increasing older adult population:
 - Mary Bethel, Associate State Director for Advocacy, AARP-NC
 - Dr. Victor Marshall, Director, UNC Institute on Aging
 - Rebecca Troutman, Intergovernmental Relations Director, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners
 - Gayla Woody, President, NC Association of Area Agencies on Aging

November 13, 2008

- Michele Alishahi, Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Research Division, gave an overview of North Carolina's General Fund outlook for 2008-2009.
- Sherry Bradsher, Director of the Division of Social Services, Department of Health and Human Services, provided a comparison of application data for Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services, and Work First programs from the first quarter of the State fiscal years 2007 and 2008. Ms. Bradsher also presented the Department of Health

and Human Services recommendations for improving recruitment and retention of county department of social services workers.

- David Atkinson, Director of the Department of Social Services, Carteret County; June Koneig, Director of the Department of Social Services, Bladen County; and Jerry Rhodes, Director of the Department of Social Services, Washington County provided information on the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services recommendations.
- Suzanne Merrill, Section Chief, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Health and Human Services, discussed the increase in administrative costs for selected adult services programs including: adult protective services, guardianship services, and State/County Special Assistance for adults.
- Kevin Kelley, Assistant Section Chief, Family Support and Child Welfare Services, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information on the funding of child welfare positions in the county departments of social services.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1: CONTINUED FUNDING OF NC FAST

During the October 15, 2008 meeting of the Committee, Ms. Angela Taylor, Associate, Social & Economic Applications, Division of Information Resource Management, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), spoke on the importance of continued State funding for implementation of North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST). As noted by Ms. Taylor, NC FAST will improve the delivery of services to social services clients by introducing "new technological tools and business processes that will enable county social services employees to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time assisting families." NC FAST will also enable all past and present applications for an entire household to be identified at one time, instead of separate searches for each member of a household, and will allow in a single process the exchange of county data with the State. Moreover, it will provide a central system for county workers to access tools, streamline workloads, increase interaction with clients and manage reporting requirements.

As noted by Ms. Sherry Bradsher, Director, Division of Social Services, DHHS, at the November 13, 2008 meeting of the Committee, the full implementation of NC FAST is "critical to the on-going success of program administration" and will directly benefit Food and Nutrition Services, Work First, Medicaid, Child Care, Special Assistance, Energy programs, Refugee programs, Child Welfare Services, and Adult and Family services. Also, paper work and administrative tasks will be reduced resulting in increased retention of workers and a reduction in employee training costs. High worker turnover rates resulting in increased training costs were frequently cited by various presenters to the Committee as issues of concern to local departments of social services (DSS).

Also at the Committee's meeting on November 13, 2008, the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) spoke of "a renewed emphasis on making NC FAST a reality" and noted that it would "greatly increase worker productivity and enable county DSS staff to more effectively serve the citizens of N.C."

RECOMMENDATION 1: CONTINUED FUNDING OF NC FAST

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues recommends that the General Assembly continue funding the NC FAST (Families Accessing Services through Technology) initiative in an effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of social services processes and programs that serve North Carolina citizens.

FINDING 2: DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAM IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM TO PROVIDE TARGETED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES EMPLOYEES

As noted by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS), and the North Carolina City and County Management Association, high turnover rates and increased

training costs are issues of major concern to DHHS, local departments of social services, and county governments. Speaking on behalf of North Carolina City and County Management Association at the September 26, 2008 meeting, Mr. Jerry Ayscue, Vance County Manager, noted that Vance County has experienced almost a 50% turnover rate in Child Protective Services staff. Ms. Sherry Bradsher, Director, Division of Social Services, DHHS, spoke at the Committee's meeting on November 13, 2008 of high turnover rates among county workers and pointed to issues such as job stress, high caseloads, and lack of direct education and or experience training as contributing factors. Also at the November 13, 2008 meeting, NCACDSS asked that State and local governments explore training needs and opportunities for workers, particularly Income Maintenance caseworkers.

During the Committee's discussion of these issues, Committee members heard of the success of the North Carolina Child Welfare Education Collaborative, a program initiated through the University system to provide both financial support to prospective Masters of Social Work (MSW) and Bachelors of Social Work (BSW) scholars and training at local departments of social services in exchange for a commitment to work, following graduation, at local departments of social services. This successful program has resulted in a well-trained pool of applicants immediately available for work in local departments.

The Committee sought to expand the benefits of a Collaborative-type program by creating a similar program in the Community College System. The Committee asked the Community College System to speak on the creation of such a program at the community college level. At the October 15, 2008 meeting of the Committee, Ms. Jennifer Frazelle, Director of Program Services, N.C. Community College System, indicated that the Community College System would work to create a product or degree to provide the necessary education and training to assist local social services departments. As described by Ms. Frazelle, this could be achieved through either the existing Humans Services Technology/Social Services Associate degree or the creation of a new Associate of Applied Science degree. For those students continuing to their bachelors degree, the program might also be used as a component of the existing Collaborative program offered through the university system. At the November 13, 2008 meeting, NCACDSS and DHHS endorsed this proposal by the Community College System as a means of creating a trained pool of applicants, particularly for income maintenance positions.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAM IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM TO PROVIDE TARGETED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES EMPLOYEES

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues recommends that the Community College System enhance the existing Human Services Technology degree, or develop a new Associate of Applied Science degree, that will provide training and development for employees of county departments of social services and to have these opportunities available by Fall 2009.

FINDING 3: CONTINUED FUNDING OF THE NC CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

As reported in finding 2, high turnover rates among county department of social services staff, especially those employed in child welfare, and the increased costs of training these workers are major concerns for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), local departments of social services, and county governments.

At the October 15, 2008 meeting, Ms. Evelyn Williams, Director, North Carolina Child Welfare Education Collaborative, presented information to the committee about this program and its efforts to help deal with the high turn over rate and increases in training costs.

According to Ms. Williams, the Collaborative provides Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work students, who receive specialized training in child welfare, financial support for their college education in exchange for a commitment to work at a local department of social services, following graduation. Since its establishment in 1999, approximately 470 students have graduated from this program, resulting in a well-trained pool of applicants immediately available for work in local departments of social services.

Ms. Williams noted that the Collaborative is administered by the Jordan Institute for Families. It is an effort of the North Carolina Division of Social Services, the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services, and the North Carolina Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. Currently, the social work degree programs in six State universities participate in the Collaborative. During the 2008 Session, the General Assembly appropriated \$900,000 in State funds (non-recurring) to enable the Collaborative to expand to four additional universities in FY 2008-09. According to Ms. Williams, this expansion would add 63 new scholars to the Collaborative annually. Ms. Williams indicated that approximately \$1.85 million from various funding sources would be needed to fully support the four additional universities. The Collaborative currently receives funding from State, federal, and universities funding sources.

RECOMMENDATION 3: CONTINUED FUNDING OF THE NC CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues recommends that the General Assembly continue funding the NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative which produces qualified candidates to fill child welfare social worker vacancies who will work to achieve positive outcomes for children and families.

FINDING 4: UPDATED CLASS SPECIFICATIONS

During the meeting on October 15, 2008, the Committee heard a presentation from Drake Maynard, Primary Human Resources Partner, with the Office of State Personnel. Mr. Maynard reported that the Office of State Personnel reviews local government pay plans to ensure that relationships between occupational groups are appropriate. The Office of State Personnel also sets up generic job classes, including minimum education and experience requirements, with input and assistance from local departments of social services. The

Committee generally reviewed the State's job class specification structure for Income Maintenance classes and Social Worker classes.

Also during the meeting, the Committee heard a presentation from Jennifer Frazelle, Director of Program Services and Elizabeth Spragins, Program Coordinator, with the North Carolina Community Colleges. The highlight of this presentation was a willingness of the community colleges to establish a program that mirrors the concept of the NC Child Welfare Education Collaborative, but provides a curriculum to meet the education and training needs of other hard to recruit positions located in departments of social services. As a result, the Committee provided Recommendation 2 contained in this report and which recommends that the Community College System enhance the existing Human Services Technology degree, or develop a new Associate of Applied Science degree, that will provide training and development for employees of county departments of social services and to have these opportunities available by Fall 2009.

Once this new program has been developed, the class specifications for positions in local departments of social services will need to be updated. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Office of State Personnel take a leadership in this endeavor and makes Recommendation 4.

RECOMMENDATION 4: UPDATED CLASS SPECIFICATIONS

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues recommends that the Office of State Personnel monitor the development of the community college program and the NC FAST system and to ensure that the class specifications for local social services positions are updated accordingly.

FINDING 5: SUPPORT PLANNING EFFORTS TO ENSURE READINESS TO SERVE AGING BABY BOOMERS

On November 12, 2008, the Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues joined the North Carolina Study Commission on Aging for a meeting on issues related to the increasing numbers of older adults that will reside in North Carolina. During this meeting, Dennis Streets, Director, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Health and Human Services, reported that currently 28 counties have more persons age 60 and older than age 17 and younger, and by 2030, this will be the case in 75 North Carolina counties. Further illustrating this point, Mr. Streets pointed out that between 2000 and 2030, population growth for the State as a whole is projected at 52.5%, while the population age 65 and older is expected to grow 123%, and those age 85 and older by 146%. Mr. Streets also mentioned a national report, *The Maturing of America: Getting Communities on Track for An Aging Population*, which concluded, "that local governments...as yet do not have the policies, programs or services in place to promote the quality of life and the abilities of older adults to live independently and contribute to their communities for as long as possible..."

During this meeting, Dr. Jim Mitchell, Director of the Center on Aging, East Carolina University, spoke on anticipated changes in North Carolina's older adult population and suggestions on ways to prepare. Additionally, Ashe County and the Town of Davidson made presentations on their local planning efforts, the processes they used, their findings, and how they plan to implement changes. Finally, the meeting concluded with a panel

discussion featuring representatives from AARP-NC, UNC Institute on Aging, North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, and the NC Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Based on the data showing the anticipated increase in the number of older adults due and the role that departments of social services play in providing programs and services for older adults, the Committee urges State and local governments to plan and prepare.

RECOMMENDATION 5: SUPPORT PLANNING EFFORTS TO ENSURE READINESS TO SERVE AGING BABY BOOMERS

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues supports the efforts of municipalities across the State, the Division of Aging and Adult Services, Department of Health and Human Services, and the NC Study Commission on Aging to ensure that North Carolina provides a range of programs and services to support and serve the anticipated increased numbers of older adults.

FINDING 6: INCREASE FROM 4% TO 5% THE DAY CARE FUNDS THAT COUNTIES MAY USE FOR ELIGIBILITY FUNCTIONS

At the November 13, 2008 meeting, the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) presented its recommendations to the committee. Included in the recommendations was the request to increase from 4% to 5% the amount of funds allocated for child care subsidies that county Departments of Social Services (DSS) may use for administration costs. Currently, DSSs are allowed to use 4% or \$80,000 (whichever is greater) of their child care subsidies allocation for administration costs. The NCACDSS requested the 1% increase to provide additional funds that may be used for child care subsidy eligibility functions. Although the 1% increase will take funds away from child care subsidies, the NCACDSS indicated that the increase in administration funds will help DSSs ensure that subsidy funds are used more efficiently which will enable them to serve more children on the child care subsidy waiting list.

RECOMMENDATION 6: INCREASE FROM 4% TO 5% THE CHILD CARE SUBSIDY FUNDS THAT COUNTIES MAY USE FOR ELIGIBILITY FUNCTIONS

The Joint Study Committee on Local Social Services Issues supports an increase from 4% to 5% the percentage of child care subsidy funds that counties may use for eligibility functions in order to perform more frequent case reviews and assure greater program integrity.

